

### Spatial Planning in the European Union: Practices to Draw on in Russia

Chistobaev, A. I.; Fedulova, S. I.

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**SPATIAL PLANNING  
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:  
PRACTICES TO DRAW  
ON IN RUSSIA**

**A. I. Chistobaev<sup>1</sup>  
S. I. Fedulova<sup>1</sup>**



*In this article, we employ a systemic-complex methodology to consider the targets, functions, and content of spatial planning in European countries and compare them to urban planning practices in Russia. We analyse concepts and terminology used in spatial planning and related areas — territorial, marine, and underground planning. The article examines the evolution of the ideas of spatial planning in the EU. We consider the documentary framework for spatial planning from the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The basic principles of spatial planning are identified in the article. We describe the level of territorial development management in the EU and its member states. The concept of 'best practices' is interpreted as an approach that includes the transfer of expert knowledge, concepts, ideas and practices developed in certain conditions and their adaptation to the needs of a different set of conditions in order to attain similar goals using the components of the transferred technique, model, or policy. We present a classification of spatial planning systems. We show how civil society is being involved in spatial planning in the EU and Russia. We stress the need to draw on the EU spatial planning experience, in particular, the involvement of civil society in project evaluation. At the same time, it is important to take into account the features of Russian natural and socioeconomic conditions.*

**Keywords:** space, territory, urban planning, projects, planning principles, best practices, civil society

### **Introduction**

The term "spatial planning" was coined in the course of evolution of spatial development management [1]. Territorial planning was applied to large mining areas in England, Germany, and France at the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Petersburg State University,  
7/9 Universitetskaya Embankment,  
Saint Petersburg, 199034, Russia.

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the last century [2]. In our country, the first district planning project was implemented for the territorial development of the oil-rich Absheron Peninsula and the city of Baku. A team of scientists led by Prof. A. P. Ivanitsky carried out this project in 1924—1925 [3]. The works by D. I. Bogorad (1960), V. V. Vladimirov (2002), V. G. Davydovich (1964) and E. G. Pertsik (1973, 2006) cover scientific and methodological principles and approaches to district planning on the territory of the USSR and the current-day Russian Federation. They present accumulated experience and, among others, include "Recommendations for improving the methods of district planning in the RSFSR" (1969), monographs "District Planning and Problems of Housing" (1970), "Integrated District Planning" (1980) and "District Planning: Designer's Handbook" (1986). After the dissolution of the USSR and the transformation of the socio-economic system, urban planning in the country has undergone fundamental changes. A new management approach to regional socio-economic development called for improved theoretical, methodological, regulatory and technological principles, and since there were none, the building development of the territory was chaotic, to put it mildly. The Town Planning Code of the Russian Federation that defines the goals and objectives of territorial planning, as well as its functions, was adopted only at the end of 2004.

To date, the Russian Federation has accumulated certain experience in territorial development management. This includes design of strategies for socio-economic development of the RF federal districts and subjects, development of territorial planning schemes for the subjects of the RF and municipal districts, resumption of the practice of master planning for cities and settlements, and the establishment of a land management system. Along with territorial planning, two more types of planning — marine and underground — have timidly sprouted. However, it is still too early to say that all three types of planning have made their way to life. The main problem is an obvious gap between the formulation of territorial development projects and their implementation, as the public seems to be rather passive when it comes to discussion and decision-making. Therefore, it is obvious that the spatial planning experience of the EU member states is useful in this respect.

### **The authors' position and research approaches**

The authors of the article have extensive experience in strategic and spatial planning at the level of the subjects of the Russian Federation and municipal districts, summarized in their previous works [3—8]. In this article, they use their knowledge to compare spatial planning practices in Europe and in Russia, to identify their key features, and to substantiate

their proposals. In this work, they combine a comparative-geographic method with spatiotemporal, genetic, reproduction, geopolitical and problem-programme scientific approaches widely used in social and geographical studies. Each of them has found its specific place in this systematic comprehensive study of spatial development of countries and regions. To carry out this study, the authors have analyzed not only scientific literature but also information and statistical resources, regulatory documents, and survey results. They have also used visual observations made both in Russia and abroad. The authors' research efforts have resulted in the current original piece of work that, in their opinion, could contribute to the development of spatial planning in Russia. Moreover, the exchange of spatial planning experience will promote cooperation of specialists in this field and the rapprochement of the Eurasian countries.

### History of European spatial planning initiatives

The concept of spatial planning was formulated in the EU when the perception of territorial development and its strategies was undergoing significant changes. This happened at the end of the last century when the EU countries were discussing the draft of a project on joint decision-making aimed at ensuring sustainable land use [9]. In the 1980s, the European Commission for the first time directed its special attention to the need to regulate the development of cities and initiated the preparation of "Europe 2000" and "Europe 2000+", thereby laying the foundations for research initiatives on urbanization problems [10]. At the same time, it was decided that, since the urban issues were not two- (like land use) but three-dimensional, the term "territorial planning" used previously should be replaced by the term "spatial planning".

Four years later (1999), Germany, the Netherlands and France initiated the adoption of a document entitled "European Spatial Development Perspective" [11]. It has never been adopted; however, it was instrumental in setting clear strategic goals for national, sectoral and regional policies in the EU member states. It was translated to all the languages of the European Union and became a kind of spatial planning manual.

Yet another document, "Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent", was developed (2000). It proposed a number of measures to ensure balanced socio-economic development of a territory combined with responsible management of natural resources and protection of the environment [12].

However, there was an obvious lack of information to conduct spatial planning works. The solution to this problem was found by establishing

the "European Network for Observing Spatial Planning" in 2002. The objective of the network was the creation of a comprehensive comparative database of data and indicators covering countries within the EU in order to facilitate the production of evidence-based and measurable solutions to assess the impact of policies adopted. The database provided the following data categories required for systematic analysis of territorial development: European, national and regional. The network also aimed to collect data required to address the issues associated with polycentric development, strengthening urban-rural linkage, ensuring territorial accessibility, introducing innovations and making attempts to solve demographic and environmental problems [13].

Another spatial planning initiative, "Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020", was based on the "Europe 2020" strategy for smart and inclusive growth. This initiative is aimed at ensuring territorial cohesion that is a set of principles for harmonious, balanced, effective and sustainable territorial development enabling equal opportunities for citizens and enterprises, wherever they are located, to make the most of their territorial potential. Territorial cohesion fosters the principle of solidarity to promote convergence between the economies of better-off territories and those whose development is lagging behind, which requires continued cooperation and integration among various regions of the EU at all relevant territorial levels.

The term "territorial cohesion" was originally used, along with economic and social cohesion, as the main objective for promoting European integration in the Lisbon Treaty (2009), which led to the creation of a spatial planning competence shared by the EU and its member states.

### **Objectives and principles of spatial planning**

In the course of the implementation of the above initiatives in the EU, spatial planning has become a kind of geographical expression of economic, environmental, social and cultural policies of society as well as an administrative mechanism and a tool for pursuing regional policies. Spatial planning is an interdisciplinary approach directed towards balanced regional development and the physical organisation of space. The EU compendium of spatial planning systems and policies says that states use it as methods to influence the future distribution of activities in space [14].

In the 2008 UN-sponsored report, it was noted that spatial planning aims at the rational territorial organization as well as at balancing demands for development with the need to protect the environment and the achievement of social and economic objectives [15]. In this process,



the objectives of territorial development, its strategies and plans are defined and developed at interregional and intermunicipal governance levels linking management of urban development, industrial and agrarian policy, transport and environmental protection.

There is vertical and horizontal coordination of spatial planning aimed at coordination of actions at different governance levels and interaction between governmental and non-governmental organizations and citizens[16].

Cross-border spatial planning pursues a similar goal. It is carried out at supranational level by means of the EU directives. The member states are bound to transpose decisions of the European Parliament into national legislation and to apply jointly developed concepts and ideas on their territory.

This is not an easy task, especially for the new members of the Union with strong long-established traditions. For example, in the Soviet time, Lithuania introduced the concept of a unified housing system implemented within the framework of a centrally-planned economy. Estonia, another Baltic country, developed and implemented the theory of the socio-economic spatial systems formation. Therefore, in the modern EU context, changing spatial planning naturally encounters certain difficulties.

The concepts of territory and space are related but not identical: "space" is more general, abstract, while "territory" is its "sub-concept" having clearly defined boundaries. Space has no boundaries; the parts of it correspond to a certain land or sea area. This leads to a reasonable conclusion that territorial planning is a form of spatial planning [17]. Other authors see spatial planning as complex socio-economic and environmental developments and consider territorial planning to be a functional zoning of the territory [9], i. e. a means to achieve a particular objective.

Spatial planning currently covers not only the land but also the sea area (marine planning) and underground territorial resources (underground planning), and, perhaps, another type of it will appear in the future — the one associated with the use of aerial space [4]. It is obvious that the concept of "space" is not limited to urban development only but includes geographic, resource, socio-economic, ethnic, confessional, geopolitical and legal space.

The principles of sustainable spatial development are the same and binding for all EU countries. The main one is the principle of territorial cohesion promoted through balanced social and economic development of regions and improved competitiveness. The principle underpinning urban-rural linkages is the encouragement of development generated by urban functions. The essence of the third principle is ensuring transport



accessibility to all places of residence, and the fourth principle is the development of access to information and knowledge. The next five principles are aimed at reducing environmental damage, enhancing and protecting natural resources and natural heritage, enhancing cultural heritage as a development factor, developing energy resources while maintaining safety, and encouraging sustainable tourism [4].

Although the EU authorities have no direct powers over spatial planning, they still influence its procedure and practice through three policy instruments: strategic policy documents, promotion of ideas and concepts; regulations and directives; funds and subsidies, e. g. those aimed to support regional development and agriculture [18; 19].

### **Systematization of approaches to spatial planning and management**

The EU authorities can have influence over spatial planning and regional development of all EU member states [19]. Nevertheless, these types of activity are nation-specific because of a local language and culture, traditional values and attitudes, a particular legal framework and a system of government [20; 21]. Due to these peculiarities, each country has its own successes and failures in regional policy and spatial planning. Thus, along with national spatial planning systems, there is European Spatial Planning (within the EU framework).

In the most general sense, the EU member states see a spatial planning system as a specific social construct featuring the application, in certain institutional contexts in time and space, of certain techniques of social cooperation directed towards ruling a collective action for the use of space [16]. Specific actions depend not only on the specifics of a decision-making process in a country but also on various socio-economic, political and cultural factors affecting the development of the productive forces.

International comparative planning research employs a typology of countries based on approaches and convergence in the context of Europeanisation, which is in detail presented in the EU Compendium on Spatial Planning Systems and Policies [22; 23]. It is based on the substantive aspects of a national legal framework at different levels of government, the scope of regional policy issues covered in documents, the nature of the division of powers between state and municipal governments, private sector share in GDP, importance of spatial planning for the state and in social life, and differences in objectives and outcomes. The same document identifies four traditions of regional development systems: 1) the "urbanism" tradition, 2) the land use management approach, 3) the regio-

nal-economic planning approach, 4) the comprehensive integrated approach (tab.). It is worth noting that some countries, for example, Germany, use the landscape approach, which is also characteristic of the current practice of spatial planning in Russia.

**Criteria approaches for the systematization  
of regional development management in the EU member states**

<i>The "Urbanism" Tradition</i>	<i>Land use management</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolution of urban development</li> <li>• Regulation of territorial development and zoning</li> </ul> <p><u>Countries:</u> the Mediterranean Member States of the EU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use zoning</li> <li>• Increased level of interaction among government bodies</li> </ul> <p><u>Country:</u> United Kingdom</p>
<i>Regional economic planning approach</i>	<i>Comprehensive integrated approach</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursuit of regional objectives</li> <li>• Reduction of regional disparities</li> <li>• Integration of spatial planning issues into regional policy</li> <li>• Emphasis on development of problematic areas</li> <li>• Innovations in the social sphere</li> <li>• Improvement of territorial development governance</li> </ul> <p><u>Countries:</u> France and (to a lesser extent) Portugal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy of plans</li> <li>• Focus on spatial planning</li> <li>• Coordination of spatial impacts of other policies</li> <li>• Justification of the principles of spatial development</li> <li>• Definition of the functions of local and central authorities</li> </ul> <p><u>Countries:</u> the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Austria and Germany</p>

Based on: [6].

**Best practices in spatial planning**

As different territories seem to have common problems, there is a need to identify effective international solutions and successful examples and to transfer them to another context. Many solutions already exist but are not widely disseminated or implemented, so the EU supports its member states and local authorities by promoting Europe's best practices, facilitating their widespread use and encouraging effective interaction and exchange of experience. It is important to provide local authorities with access to existing solutions to allow them to learn from each other and develop solutions adapted to their specific situations.

The notion of "best practice" has become widespread in European policies and regional development programmes [24]. The identification of best practices and their promotion contribute to the accumulation of knowledge and facilitate progress in various spheres of life, including spatial organization of society.





The idea of sustainable development originated in the Netherlands in the late 1980s, and then in Germany it was embedded in spatial development. France is especially successful in transition to a balanced urban system. Finland and Sweden have rich experience in managing the northern territories. Germany, the Netherlands, France and Sweden have impressive achievements in public transport promotion. Italy, Spain and Greece have succeeded in developing tourism and protecting cultural heritage. The exchange of experience at the supranational level facilitates the development of documents and databases aimed at spatial development harmonization. Therefore, the *best practice* is a scientific approach that involves the transfer of expertise (expert knowledge), concepts, ideas and practices developed in a certain context to solve a particular problem in another context in order to achieve a similar desired result through the use of components of the transferred method, model or policy [25].

One of the most promoted ideas in the EU is the compact city concept, suggesting that continuing urban growth requires dense and proximate development patterns to reduce the negative impact on the environment and maintain the well-being of urban residents. The compact city development mitigates the effects of climate change and reduces automobile dependence by providing sustainable transport and consuming less energy for heating. Moreover, compact cities can facilitate the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services outside cities.

To ensure that the consequences for other cities, regions or countries interested in implementing best practices are positive, policy-makers, politicians and other stakeholders should fully understand all aspects of ideas, tools and policies before transferring them to their own cities or regions. The ideas from different geographical, cultural and planning contexts imply not only successes that may be achieved but also difficulties that one may encounter. There are some generalized policy ideas, tools and processes that can be successfully applied to international contexts. Nevertheless it is unlikely that any model that has proved successful in one context will work in a different one. Local policy-makers and experts need to develop their own context-specific solutions for transferring best practices, using international examples only as inspiration. Any solutions should be specific to a particular territory, a political and planning situation, and cultural preferences to ensure successful implementation.

### Public participation in spatial planning

It was not until recently that citizen participation and general stakeholder involvement has become a standard part of the planning process and public policy in general. In spite of the existing concerns that their

participation may result in delays in policy development and decision-making, public participation has become common and almost universally accepted as best practice.

Spatial management in the EU countries relies on a thorough analysis of various environmental, economic, technological and social processes. The more people from different spheres of activity and social strata participate in the development and examination of spatial planning documents, the higher is the likelihood of effective project implementation [6].

Instead of being passive consumers, the EU citizens are turning into participants of decision-making processes [26, 27]. Thus, the spatial planning systems are becoming open, consultative and interactive; they have developed both vertical and horizontal links.

Multilateral communication is beneficial to all planning process participants because it improves the quality of decision-making and balances public and private interests in conflict situations due to a better understanding of needs, preferences and values of people, which is achieved by communicating with them. The social context and public trust are of growing concern to regional and city authorities. Residents have the opportunity to realize their creative potential and to improve their environment [28]. This develops their civic awareness and responsibility for the future of their country, region and city. Business facilitates the search for opportunities to influence decision-making and policy development, and supports best practices and technologies [6].

The best system is believed to be the one which is developed with engagement of city authorities, specialists and external experts and consultants, business community and the public. Residents of a territory under planning and all other stakeholders are able to participate in the development of strategies and plans at any stage of the process.

At the moment, traditional public involvement activities dominate in many countries. They include public hearings, consultations, exhibitions and public meetings. However, it is expected that in the future interactive consultancy websites will be the most popular tool for public involvement. It is necessary to understand how to motivate citizens to contribute their own ideas to urban development since there is a significant difference between formal participation and the real power needed to influence the outcome of the process. The fundamental point is that participation without redistribution of power is just a waste of time as in this case, even with all opinions considered, a final decision benefits one party only. For this very reason, new cooperative and interactive methods of civic participation in spatial planning are being developed all over the world.

One of them is an online geo-questionnaire used to elicit geographic data in the variety of topics and geographical contexts. Materials are



presented together with an interactive map, which allows respondents to answer questions related to the geographical features of a territory under planning. Geo-questionnaires aim to provide localized data on residents' perception and everyday experience in the form convenient for analysis. The increased demand for such new methods for collecting data on experience, opinions and preferences of urban residents is explained by a greater focus that city authorities give to sustainable development and community involvement. At the same time, the development of geo-spatial technologies and social networks has enabled the use of new types of geo-information data. This has resulted in the emergence of new GIS methods for public involvement and the engagement of large groups of individuals.

### Evaluation of spatial planning experience in Russia

The authors' experience in spatial planning in Russia and the analysis of the best EU practices suggest significant differences in the prevailing approaches to spatial planning. However, the main difference, besides the structure and content of the documents being developed, is the approach to public participation in spatial planning combined with the lack of forms of civic engagement in Russia.

The Town Planning Code of the Russian Federation provides only for public discussions of urban development documents. Such forms of citizen participation as conferences, appeals to local authorities, meetings and surveys are rarely used. The passivity of citizens during project discussions can be explained by the lack of trust in politicians and state institutions, and the peculiarities of mentality. The lack of transparency prevents a constructive dialogue between the public and government officials. This is largely due to the lack of formal requirements for presentation of layouts and schemes of existing buildings; moreover, the lack of brief textual and visual information at public discussions obscures the situation for ordinary citizens.

An illustrative example is a one-day public discussion of Moscow Master Plan that had been developed over a period of five years. Obviously, it was impossible to reply to all 75,000 comments in such a short time. In addition, it is worth noting that most of the comments were not relevant, which can be explained by the complexity of the document, its size, lack of visual materials as well as a limited understanding of the issues by citizens. Moreover, after a 2.4-fold increase in Moscow's territory, the relevance of this long-term plan was called into question. A similar situation arose in St. Petersburg in connection with development of planning for the town of Yuzhny that adjoins the city. The residents initiated an environmental assessment but the expert group was headed by

an expert on ancient oriental culture. The plan was approved by amateur experts, although real experts were against it. Similar examples can be identified in other towns, cities and regions across Russia.

In general, legal opportunities for public participation in development project discussions are established but they are realized formally or not in full. The disregard of interests and opinions of ordinary citizens is a major drawback of Russian spatial planning. Yet, to stick to the principle of fairness, it should be noted that some regions of the Russian Federation show a slight increase in the activity of citizens and public structures in managerial decision-making; however, the number of such examples is still limited. In view of this, we believe Russia can draw on the experience in spatial planning accumulated in the EU countries.

### Conclusions

Despite considerable Russian and international experience in spatial planning, many of its aspects have not been properly assessed yet. The comparison of Russian and European experience reveals different trends in regional policy development and territorial development management. For example, European countries are reconsidering the role of the state and civil society in spatial planning and urban development, while in Russia the state-centred approach to decision-making on the functional use of the territory remains predominant. Its main drawback lies in the fact that according to the Town Planning Code of the Russian Federation spatial planning documents shall comply with uniform requirements that do not take into account the specifics of natural and socio-economic conditions of territories, the diversity of which in Russia is greater than in any other country. At the same time, the EU countries (which, in this case, we consider to be large regions) can follow upper-level recommendations with a certain extent of variations while applying common principles of sustainable spatial development.

To increase the effectiveness of spatial development and management in Russia, it is necessary to analyze, adapt and test best practices and modern technologies. In this connection, new objectives for research are clear; they should summarize national and international experience in spatial planning and implement its best practices in Russia.

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#### The authors

*Prof. Anatoly I. Chistobaev*, Department of Regional Policy and Political Geography, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia.

E-mail: chistobaev40@mail.ru

*Dr Svetlana I. Fedulova*, Lecturer, Department of Regional Policy and Political Geography, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia.

E-mail: lana10s@yandex.ru

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